

# Brighton & Hove Local Access Forum Meeting – Minutes 25-01-24

## Attendees:

Luke Burstow (LB) *Chair*

Dave Brookshaw (DB)

Pete Hodd (PH)

David Taylor (DT)

Liz Symes (LS)

John Funnell (JF)

Chantelle Hoppé (CH) – BHCC Rights of Way Officer (*minutes*)

## Apologies:

Ali Polowski (AP)

Andrew Coleman (AC)

### 1. Welcome & Introductions / AGM

CH welcomed the group – hybrid meeting held in person at Hove Town Hall with remote access on Microsoft Teams.

(CH) AGM Business: LB has volunteered to stand again as Chair. DB nominated LB and seconded by PH. Unanimously voted in by the group (quorate). CH and the group thanked LB for his continuing role as Chair.

### 2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

LAF Members agreed the minutes of the last meeting

## Actions Update:

(LB) Diversity Discussion topic. (AC) Thank you for the detailed minuting of the discussion in emailed comments. (CH) unfortunately Sabah has not responded to requests for the slides from the last meeting (which contained links to further information). (LB) has the Transport Partnership tackled this issue? (DB) There have been discussions through the Active and Inclusive Travel Forum – but this has now been disbanded. Only discussions – not much action. (LB) Is this something the council can look at as there is policy whereas the LAF are a group of volunteers. (CH) Can bring this up with James Woodward to see if the Downland Advisory Panel can help.

(LS) Not at the last meeting – but diversity includes accessibility. Brighton & Hove is quite poorly serviced in terms of accessible access to the countryside – in comparison to places like Cumbria / Yorkshire – both in terms of infrastructure and information provision. Parks in Saltdean are outstanding. (LB) agreed that the term diversity is all encompassing in terms of equal access and protected characteristics.

(DB) Coombe Farm – SDNPA have been leading on the scrub clearance on the hillside as part of downland restoration. SDNPA provided comments on the Planning Application to BHCC – requesting that access to the Downs should be part of the development. This development may be on hold for the time being?

(DB) Riding Stables Warren Rd – the Estates team are currently looking for another tenant for this parcel of land. The original tenant they had was not willing to take it on with Open Access

(CH) to ask if a councillor would like to attend LAF meetings – Cllr Rowkins will be invited to the next LAF meeting in April

(DB) (PH) Need to find a different date for the July LAF meeting – DB can't do 25<sup>th</sup> and PH can't do 18<sup>th</sup>

***Actions: CH – talk to James Woodward (Downland Advisory Panel) about improved diversity / representation and invite Cllr Rowkins to the next meeting.***

### **3. Discussion Items (Standing items)**

**Access for All Project** (CH) – the draft feasibility studies for Access For All, Stanmer Bridleways and Coldean Lane / Lewes Rd junction bids are currently with National Highways – we are waiting to hear back from them.

#### **City Downland Estate Plan (CDEP):**

(DB) The areas under review at the moment include:

- Patcham Court Farm
- Ovingdean Grange Farm
- Pickershill Farm

At the last Downland Advisory Panel meeting there was an informative talk on the affect of dog walking on local ecology and stock grazing by Paul Gorringe (BHCC Ranger for Waterhall Rewilding Project). Major impact on ecology is from the dog urine / faeces – changing the habitat. (PH) has witnessed stock worrying from dogs. (DB) Pauls' approach is to be non-confrontational and explain the issues to the dog walkers. Most are responsive to this approach e.g. keep dogs on leads in certain areas. (LB) Sure a lot of dog walkers are attracted to Waterhall by the free parking – especially as you now have to pay at Stanmer. (DB) It's also a problem at Ovingdean Grange farm.

(DT) James Woodward has been applying for Local Nature Recovery strategy funding – unsuccessful so far.

(DB) Patcham Court Farm Plan goes to Committee on Monday – in terms of access it is mainly widening the permissive footpath through the middle of the arable field. (Arable provides biodiversity in the area). (DT) with a 4.5m wide path a topper can be run down the path once or twice a year to help maintain it.

(DB) Ovingdean Grange Farm plan is also going to committee. There is good access on this farm – the main issue here is the competing demands between access and the stewardship scheme for improving biodiversity – especially on the field margins. (CH) working with James Woodward on signage for the area – especially for dog walkers.

(CH) There has been public scrutiny recently at Ovingdean Grange Farm due to the recent ploughing. There were concerns that the farmer had ploughed up the field margin bridleway paths. On inspection the field margins have been harrowed (raked) rather than ploughed (which would contravene Public Rights of Way Guidance – no cultivation of field margin paths). The harrowing was carried out to level and realign the margins as the course of paths had wandered into the fields where the margins were rutted. The farmer is planning to reinstate the paths fully by rolling them (as the harrowing has made them muddy and soft under foot). One of the gates (from

Woodingdean down into the valley in Ovingdean) will also be receiving some attention – due to soil creep it will not open fully, making it difficult for horse riders to navigate. It will be dug out on the upslope side.

(PH) will the soft margin along the newly surfaced path at Old Parish Lane be reinstated? (CH) has asked for this to be included in the farm tenancy agreement.

(DB) Pickershill Farm – with the renewal of tenancy here there is a chance to instate Missing Link 52. This is in East Sussex but on Brighton & Hove tenanted land. The path will be a permissive footpath if ESCC are unwilling to adopt. The field could also be designated open access. This will provide good access to the open access land adjacent to the pumping station. If it were to be designated open access it would provide a good conservation management project of grazing for downland restoration between the two parcels of land.

CDEP – Woodland Management Plan (CH) – BHCC are taking back in house all the parcels of woodland and taking them out of farm tenancies. This is to improve them for biodiversity but also to look at improved access.

(JF) It would be good if there is representation on the Downland Advisory Panel from the County Archaeologist – particularly for advice on tree planting schemes etc. (CH) There is a parallel Officers Working Group to the DAP, Neil Griffiths (the County Archaeologist) sits on this – so has oversight of all the plans. Our last discussion did cover tree planting.

(LB) Lessons should be learnt from the clear felling at Stanmer due to Ash Die back. The tree planting in the felled areas is being swamped by the regrowth from the coppiced ash trees.

(PH) has seen a lot of clearance around bridleways of Ash for safety reasons.

## **Transport Partnership**

(DB) Transport Partnership meeting was on 9<sup>th</sup> January – where a new terms of reference was proposed. (DB) made the point that the partnership should be about travel not just transport as the latter suggests motorised / the term travel includes walking and cycling. Walking and cycling is getting more attention now but the balance is still out of kilter.

Tracy Beverly updated on capital spends – mostly urban projects – but did mention the completion of Old Parish Lane bridleway resurfacing.

The final stage of the Valley Gardens project is going ahead – a lot has already been committed to the project and it will deliver slight improvements. The roundabout by Palace Pier will be replaced by traffic lights. This will allow for better control of traffic flow.

The latest Air Quality Action Plan and status reports are now available: (DB provided the links):

- The 2022 Air Quality Action Plan - [This latest Air Quality Action Plan \(2022 to 2027\)](#)
- The latest air quality Annual Status Report - [2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report \(ASR\)](#)

(DB) Announced that he would like to stand down from the Transport Partnership. It is one of the most important stakeholder groups the LAF sits on but he feels he needs to pull back on some commitments.

The commitment is bi-monthly meetings at Jubilee Library 4-6pm. Nominated (PH) to step in to the role

(PH) To be clear – would be representing the LAF interests and reporting back to the group at meetings. (PH) happy to give it a go as long as can make the meetings. (LB) offered to step in if there are meetings PH can't make. (DB) would attend the first meeting with PH as an introduction. Next meeting is 19<sup>th</sup> March – PH is away so DB will attend. DB and PH will go to the following meeting together:

14<sup>th</sup> May (PH & DB), 9<sup>th</sup> July (LB), 10<sup>th</sup> Sept (PH), 12<sup>th</sup> Nov (PH)

**Actions: DB to send PH more information about Transport Partnership meetings**

#### **4. Reports for AGM (summaries of 2023)**

##### **Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)**

Summary of achievements in 2023:

- Adhering to least restrictive access: replaced 8 gates, tarmac 'slip-way' around vehicle barrier
  - Accessibility improvements – resurfaced a section of Stanmer easy access trail
  - Multi-user paths – upgraded Old Parish Lane bridleway to hard surfaced commuter path
  - Information provision – 7 new waymarking posts
- Working with James Woodward on new Downs 'gateway' signage and consistent countryside education signs  
Working with Walking Officer on linking bus stops with walks on the PRow network (linked to gateway signage)

(DB) has some walk leaflets produced in the path 'take the bus for a walk' – these could be a useful starting point

(LS) It would be good if some of the routes included bridleways / were accessible

Pipeline Projects (Funding Dependent):

- Access for All (new paths to Devil's Dyke & Ditchling Beacon), Stanmer Bridleway resurfacing & improvements to the crossings at Lewes Rd / Coldean Lane junction (National Highways Projects)
- New signage described above
- Happy Valley behind the hedge path
- Coldean Lane crossing improvements
- Waterhall Rewilding new walking trails / new accessible trail
- Toads-Hole-Valley A27 Crossing improvements and new paths through the development
- Waymarking projects: Stanmer bridleway, Hollingdean Woods, Brighton & Hove Way

**Actions: DB to send CH the bus walk leaflets**

##### **Maintenance & Management**

Gate Repairs	9
Gate Replacements	8
Stile Replacement / Repair	2
Waymark installation	7
Vegetation Clearance (from public requests)	18
Surface Improvements	2
Obstruction	3

Surfacing Projects: Stanmer Easy Access Trail (bridleway near High Park Farm), Old Parish Lane bridleway, Ovingdean to Woodingdean

Pipeline surfacing projects: Withdean Footpath TW B8 (hard surfacing), Waterhall Bridleway B76 (increase footprint of slipway around vehicle barrier)

Asset & Condition Survey using Vaisala – about 1/3 of the network has been covered so far (hampered by the wet conditions over the winter)

(LB) The bridleway in Patcham parallel to the A27 was churned up very badly by the farmer's tractor

(CH) This is becoming a real problem with the wetter winters. In this instance the farmer has offered to reinstate the path and look for alternate field access next winter. However, a lot of the bridleways around the estate are also farm tracks and suffer from damage by farm machinery / vehicle tracks. A longer term solution might be surface stabilisation on the worst sections. Currently trying to get a quote for this for future funding applications.

### **Legal Rights of Way Work**

- Benfield DMMO: The Planning Inspectorate has been in touch to give us a date in October 2024 for the public inquiry. We have three path users willing to give evidence at the inquiry.
- Longridge Avenue – the report has been written and will be presented at the next Transport & Sustainability Committee meeting.

### **5. Missing Links / Lost Ways / Unrecorded Paths**

(DB) Awaiting determination of the Longridge Avenue DMMO application. Would it be possible to be present at the Committee Meeting when the report is presented?

***Actions: CH to find out if DB can be present at the committee meeting when the report is presented?***

### **6. Any Other Business**

#### **Brighton Greenway (CH)**

Been contacted by the Chair of the Friends of Brighton Greenway – they would like to extend the current extent of the Greenway, from Brighton Train Station up towards Preston Park.

(LB) The LAF would potentially support this proposal but would need more information about the actual route of the path – particularly where it would come out at the northern end and meet the highway.

#### **A23 Cycle Improvements (LB)**

This looks like a good scheme. Still concerned about the junction at the bottom of Standford Ave / Preston Park. Sight lines still look to be an issue with new proposals, though it is an improvement. (PH) Becky Reynolds – Cycle UK and Chris Todd are following up on this.

#### **Transport Partnership (CH)**

Would like to take the opportunity to give thanks to Dave Brookshaw for his service to the LAF in representing access issues so well at so many different forums. He is well known and respected across the council for his dedication and passion to improving access. It is totally understandable that he would want to step back from some of his very many commitments including the Transport Partnership. Thank you for continuing involvement in the LAF and on other stakeholder engagement groups (like DAP) that take a lot of time and effort. Seconded by (LB) and the rest of the group.

***Actions: CH find out where the Greenways path is planned to go / where it would come out***

**Dates of Meetings 2024: (Thursdays 6-8pm)**

25<sup>th</sup> January (AGM)

25<sup>th</sup> April

11<sup>th</sup> July

24<sup>th</sup> October